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**EAGLE PASS RANCHER CONVICTED OF FACILITATING MARIJUANA IMPORTATION**

**(SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS)** This morning, a federal jury convicted a rancher for using his border ranch as a gateway for the illegal importation of marijuana.

The jury convicted 61-year-old **GUILLERMO "WILLIE" MARTINEZ** on nine federal charges including operating a continuing criminal enterprise, conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, and 7 substantive counts of aiding and abetting the possession with intent to distribute quantities of marijuana ranging in weight from less than 50 kilos to more than 100 kilos.

The jury also convicted Martinez' co-defendant—37-year-old **JESUS ROGELIO "CHUY" MIRANDA**—of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, and three substantive counts of aiding and abetting the possession with intent to distribute quantities of marijuana in excess of 100 kilograms. Miranda, an Eagle Pass resident, was a recruiter of drivers used to distribute the marijuana.

After deliberating for just under two hours, the jury found that from May 1997 through August 2001, Martinez and Miranda used Martinez' ranch property 11 miles West of Eagle Pass as a staging area for the importation and distribution of thousands of pounds of marijuana into the United States from Mexico. During this investigation, from November 23, 1999 until August 17, 2001, law enforcement officers seized seven loads of marijuana totaling 2,784 pounds. According to testimony during the trial, the marijuana was destined for Houston and San Antonio.

Both defendants remain in federal custody pending sentencing scheduled for 9:00am on September 9, 2001. Martinez faces between 20 years and life in federal prison; Miranda, between ten years and life in federal prison.

This case was investigated by agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the United States Border Patrol. Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel Kinnicutt and Russell Soloway are prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

This investigation is continuing.

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